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FLOOR DEBATE

February 7, 2001 LB 270

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Hudkins, you're recognized to open on LB 270.

SENATOR HUDKINS: Thank you, Mr. President and members of the body. LB 270 provides a statutory licensing and regulatory mechanism for acupuncturists who wish to practice in our state. Why is this bill important? Well, right now there is a peculiarity in our state law that prevents a patient who might wish to use acupuncture from going to a skilled practitioner in Nebraska professionally trained in that science. Instead, that patient must see a medical doctor or a chiropractor, both of whom who are certainly expert in their own respective fields but they are likely to have only a rudimentary or knowledge of or very little background in this very complex skill and, as a result, Nebraska patients who wish to receive this treatment from a licensed and experienced acupuncturist must go to another state. Quite simply, the bill would change the law which currently permits caregivers, medical doctors and chiropractors with relatively little specific training to offer acupuncture services, while it also prevents the most thoroughly prepared practitioners of that science from administering it. At the same time, though, the bill has absolutely no impact upon the way in which either doctors or chiropractors currently use acupuncture in their practices. Those already permitted by their professional licenses to perform acupuncture will be able to continue doing so. If physicians and chiropractors may administer acupuncture with approximately 200 hours of schooling, then it only makes sense that trained acupuncturists with an average of 2,000 hours of formal instruction should be allowed to practice it as well. What this really boils down to then is a matter of health care choice. It seeks to give patients desiring acupuncture treatment a choice. They may receive it from a medical doctor, a chiropractor, or someone whose professional expertise is in that specific field. What may seem strange to us is readily accepted by those of Asian descent. Acupuncture has thousands of years of history and many whose cultures practice it swear to its effectiveness. The fact that both medical doctors and chiropractors in this state already may practice acupuncture indicates that Nebraska's health care community also appreciates its therapeutic worth.